



# LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY Health Department

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## **Jury Finds Local Casino Guilty of Violating Clean Indoor Air Act**

The manager of the Best Bet Casino in Helena was found guilty by a Justice Court jury late Monday of violating the Montana Clean Indoor Air Act (CIAA).

The case marks the first time in the state that prosecution of the 2005 law has gone to a trial by jury.

The CIAA bans smoking in any enclosed public place or workplace, and it requires businesses to post easily visible no-smoking signs at all public entrances. A person who owns, manages, operates, or otherwise controls a public place or workplace and fails to comply with the provisions can be found guilty of a misdemeanor after a third violation within three years.

Bars, taverns, and casinos were given until Oct. 1, 2009, to comply with the state law.

Violation of the CIAA is punishable by a fine of up to \$500, depending on the number offenses. Judge Swingley has not yet set a sentencing date in the Best Bet case.

The Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department is responsible for enforcing the Clean Indoor Air Act locally. It issued its first warning to Sandy Jones, manager of the Best Bet Casino, on Oct. 21, 2009, citing "evidence of smoking (ashtrays, cigarette butts, etc.) in an enclosed public place."

"We're delighted that the jury recognized the importance of having healthy, smokefree environments for patrons and employees of local businesses, and that the health of the community takes priority over the desire to smoke," said Melanie Reynolds, Lewis and Clark County health officer.

Reynolds pointed out that even small amounts of secondhand smoke are known to cause heart disease and lung cancer. Smokefree laws such as the CIAA have been shown to reduce heart attacks by almost 20 percent, according to the Montana Tobacco Use Prevention Program.

Reynolds noted that compliance with the CIAA in Lewis and Clark County has generally been excellent.

"Our goal is to ensure that all businesses are held to the same standards," she said.

For more information about the Clean Indoor Air Act and the importance of tobacco-free environments – or to report a violation of the no-smoking law – contact the Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department at 406-457-8924.

*The Lewis & Clark City-County Health Department's mission is to  
improve and protect the health of all county residents.*